

FUTURE TEACHERS' CONDITIONAL SCHOLARSHIP Program Evaluation

February 2002

Executive Summary

The Future Teachers' Conditional Scholarship program was established as a demonstration project to address teacher shortages in the K-12 public school system. Created by EHB 2487, the FY 2000 Supplemental Budget Act, the program provides forgivable loans to public school K-12 classified employees who want to earn certification to teach in Washington's public schools.

The Future Teachers' Conditional Scholarship program is awarded as a student loan that is forgiven in exchange for service as a Washington public school teacher following college graduation. One year of the loan is forgiven for every two years the recipient teaches full-time in a Washington K-12 public school. Forgiveness is accelerated if a recipient teaches in a designated shortage area — one year of the loan is forgiven for each year of full-time teaching service in a designated shortage area. Forgiveness is prorated for recipients who teach part-time. Recipients who do not fulfill the teaching obligation must repay the loan, a loan equalization fee and interest.

The Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) administers the program. The Board is required to provide information to the 2002 Legislature and the Governor about the impact of this demonstration program, particularly on people entering the teaching profession in shortage areas. This report is submitted in response to that requirement.

Implemented during the 2000-2001 academic year, the program is currently in its second year. Due to funding limitations, only students who applied during the first year were eligible to receive scholarships during the program's second year.

Four hundred ninety individuals applied for a Future Teachers' Conditional Scholarship. Of those, 279 were awarded. To date, a total of \$1,048,486 has been paid to recipients, with further payments scheduled for the balance of each scholar's education.

Most of the recipients were awarded in both years of the program, and are still enrolled. However, 33 recipients have graduated and earned teacher certification. Of these, 26 are currently teaching in Washington K-12 public schools, two in the content shortage area of special education. Seven other recipients have completed their educational programs and are in a grace period in which they have six months from graduation to begin teaching in an eligible school before their loan payments become due.

Because of the short time period in which the Future Teachers' Conditional Scholarship program has been in operation, it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions about success and, in particular, its impact on teaching shortage areas. Nevertheless, the program thus far has seen initial successes and suggests that long-term positive outcomes could result through this or a similar program.

Introduction

The Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship program was established as a demonstration project to address teacher shortages in the K-12 public school system by providing forgivable loans to public school classified employees who want to earn certification to teach in Washington's public schools. EHB 2487, the FY 2000 Supplemental Budget Act, created the program and funded it at \$1 million. An additional \$1 million, for renewal awards only, was included in ESSB 6153, the 2001-03 Operating Budget. The first conditional scholarships were awarded during the 2000-01 Academic Year.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) administers the program. The Board is required to provide information to the 2002 Legislature and the Governor about the impact of this demonstration program, particularly on people entering the teaching profession in shortage areas. Although definitive conclusions are not possible due to the program's brief history, this report summarizes the program's activities and results to date, and is submitted to respond to the reporting requirement.

Program Description

The Future Teachers Conditional Scholarship is awarded as a student loan that is forgiven in exchange for service as a Washington public school teacher, following college graduation. One year of the loan is forgiven for every two years the recipient teaches full-time in a Washington K-12 public school. Forgiveness is accelerated to a rate of one year of forgiveness for each year of full-time teaching service if a recipient teaches in a designated geographic or subject shortage area identified by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).¹ Teaching service includes comparable employment as a substitute or part-time teacher; however, forgiveness is prorated for recipients who teach part-time.

Recipients who do not fulfill the teaching obligation must repay the loan, a loan equalization fee and interest. Repayment begins following a grace period of up to six months after recipients leave school or graduate without beginning to teach in a Washington K-12 public school. The maximum annual award amount for students enrolled full-time at two-year colleges is \$2,000. The maximum annual award at four-year institutions is \$4,000. Students attending less than full-time (defined as 12.0 credit hours per term) receive pro-rated awards calculated as $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, or $\frac{3}{4}$ of the full-time award. While the scholarship is awarded on an academic year basis, installments are paid each term following confirmation of student enrollment. Subject to available funding, students may receive the conditional scholarship for up to the equivalent of five academic years of full-time enrollment.

¹ OSPI has designated the following as subject shortage areas: Special Education, English as a Second Language, chemistry, physics, Japanese, bilingual education, mathematics and technology education. OSPI has not had a system in place to identify geographic shortage areas but is currently addressing this need and expects to have such areas identified within the next year.

Program Implementation

The program was implemented in fall 2000. The Higher Education Coordinating Board posted information about the program on its Web site, and the program was publicized through OSPI and public school employee organizations. Applications were distributed in the fall, awards announced in December 2000, and the first payments made in February 2001. Awards were retroactive for the full academic year.

Application Process

Applicants were required to meet the following conditions at the time of application:

- Employed currently, or during the prior school year, as a Washington public school K-12 classified employee;
- Enrolled, or planning to enroll, in an accredited Washington institution of higher education within three months of notification of award with the purpose of pursuing initial teacher certification. (Recipients may pursue a master's degree in teaching if this degree would result in completion of initial teacher certification.)
- Plan to be employed as a teacher in a Washington K-12 public school after completion of requirements for initial teacher certification;
- Not pursuing a degree in theology; and
- Submit an application to the HECB by November 1, 2000, and satisfy minimum application requirements as determined by the HECB.

Applicants were required to submit a completed HECB application form; college and/or high school grade transcript(s) for all schools attended since September 1, 1995; and the recommendation of a current teacher or school official.²

A selection committee, composed of educators and leaders in business and government, reviewed and scored applications. At least three reviewers rated each application. Materials were scored on five criteria. Those criteria and the possible point range for each are as follows:

Future Teachers' Conditional Scholarship Application Criteria and Scoring	
Point Range	Application Criteria
0 - 25 points	Length of time to initial teacher certification
(-) 5 - 20 points	Grade point average from academic transcripts
0 - 5 points	Years of contribution to Washington public schools
(-) 5 - 25 points	Overall rating of the applicant based on statements #17 and #19 of the application. (These statements ask the applicant for additional comments regarding his/her academic record, ability, or plans; contribution to Washington public schools; and commitment to serving as a Washington K-12 public school teacher.)
(-) 5 - 25 points	Applicant's potential to be a K-12 teacher, based on teacher or school official's recommendation

² Application materials attached

Applicants could receive a maximum of 100 points and a minimum of (-) 15 points.

The HECB received 490 applications by the specified deadline. Based on the amount of funds available and the applicants' plans for enrollment and time to graduation, the HECB determined that a minimum total score of 60 would be required for award receipt.

Applicant Characteristics

Residents of 34 Washington counties submitted applications. The large majority of applicants previously worked in a school located in, or adjacent to, their county of residence. As required, all had worked in classified positions in the public school system prior to application. Position titles of applicants varied across schools, including work as classroom paraprofessionals, computer lab assistants, administrative assistants, and migrant/bilingual aides. Slightly more than half the applicants had worked three or more years in the K-12 public school system. Many exhibited knowledge and experience about K-12 public school students, classrooms, and systems.

In addition to time spent in K-12 schools and classrooms, applicants voiced strong commitment and a variety of reasons for wanting to become classroom teachers. Some indicated that they wanted to make a positive impact on children's lives by being teachers; some wanted to share, through teaching, the joy they had found in learning. Following are some of the statements submitted by applicants:

"There is no greater feeling than to know that you have made a difference in someone's life. That's what teaching is all about. I know that I can and will affect many students' lives."

"I have wanted to be a teacher since fourth grade. ... Teaching to me is helping a child to uncover, discover, and develop themselves for their future. I want to help children to grow and experience the possibilities learning has to offer them. ... I plan to finish my career teaching."

"I love science and want to share my fascination with students."

"For over 15 years I've been trying to reach my goal of being the first in my family to graduate from a four-year college. English has always been my love ... but over the years many obstacles have forced me to shelve my dream including total deafness and having to learn a new language... After tutoring special ed students for the school district last year, ... I've decided I want to spend the rest of my career teaching English, reading and writing, and sign language to both hearing and deaf and English and non-English-speaking children and adults."

Applicants also provided reasons for wanting the scholarship. For example:

“For the past three years, I have taught full-time as a bilingual para-educator in a public school and attended summer sessions ... to complete studies leading to teacher certification. It has been an expensive endeavor. ...If I qualify for assistance ... I will be able, hopefully, to finish my endorsement in bilingual education ...I will be able to teach in a ‘high need’ school – specifically a school with a large number of Spanish- speaking, low-income students.”

“...I took a job as a para-educator in a local school. ...After a year... I knew my path, applied, ... and have now completed one and a half quarters towards a May 2001 graduation. I am, however, struggling to make ends meet financially and would appreciate being considered for this conditional loan. Thank you.”

At the time they applied, about 70 percent of the applicants indicated they were enrolled or had been accepted for the 2000 fall term by the college at which they planned to use the conditional scholarship. Of those who were enrolled or accepted for enrollment, 69 percent indicated they would attend full-time.

Sixty-six percent of all applicants indicated they were at the junior class level or higher. Of these students, almost two-thirds were already enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a program leading to teacher certification.

Recipient Characteristics

Of the 490 applicants, 305 (62 percent) received a score of 60 or more, and were notified of their selection. Less than 10 percent of those selected declined the scholarship. Those who declined cited several reasons. Although the program was implemented in the fall, and scholarships were retroactive to the beginning of the academic year, the first awards were not paid until February 2001. Consequently, some students had graduated by then; others had decided to drop out of school or had changed their minds about pursuing teacher certification. A few students indicated that, even with this scholarship, they did not have enough money to attend college at the time.

By December 2001, a total of 254 students had received a payment for one or more academic terms, with another 25 recipients pending payment.³ All recipients have submitted a plan detailing their expected term-by-term enrollment and anticipated completion date.

Scholarships were awarded to residents of 27 Washington counties.

Since the program was established as a demonstration project, and its purpose was to address the need for more teachers in the public K-12 education system, preference was given to students who had demonstrated a commitment to completing the education they needed to earn teacher certification. Therefore, a high percentage of recipients (82 percent) were enrolled or accepted for enrollment by the college at which they planned to use the conditional scholarship. Nearly three-fourths of those who were enrolled or accepted for enrollment planned to attend college full-time.

³ Payment to these 25 students will be made upon receipt of signed promissory notes.

Also as expected, a high percentage (87 percent) of the scholarship recipients indicated being at least at the junior class level. Over 70 percent of this latter group indicated they were already enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a program leading to teacher certification.

Of the 279 recipients, most (175) received awards for both years of the program. Of these 175 students, 172 remain currently enrolled, two have graduated, and one dropped out of school.

Thirty-nine students received the scholarship for the first year only. Of these, 31 recipients graduated, three left the teacher certification program, and five stopped out in the first term of the second year, but have indicated plans to enroll again later this academic year.

Forty students who applied, and who were awarded during the program's initial year, chose to delay enrollment until the program's second year. An additional 25 students will receive conditional scholarship funds when they have returned signed promissory notes.

Future Teachers' Conditional Scholarship Recipients	
Number awarded for both years	175
Number awarded first year only	39
Number who delayed enrollment to second year	40
Number pending return of promissory notes	25
Total Number of Recipients	279

Recipients have enrolled in 37 different postsecondary institutions, including six public universities, 20 community and technical colleges, and 11 independent colleges and universities. Most of the students who received scholarships for both years of the program remained at the same institution. Sixteen students changed schools between the first and second year of the program.

Year-One to Year-Two Transfers Among Scholarship Recipients	
Community/Technical College to Four-Year Institution	12
Four-Year Institution to Community/Technical College	2
Four-Year Institution to Another Four-Year Institution	2

Program Outcomes

The Future Teachers' Conditional Scholarship program has been in operation for just over one year. During this time:

- 254 recipients have received an award in one or more academic terms; an additional 25 recipients will receive scholarships pending return of signed promissory notes.
- A total of \$1,048,486 has been disbursed to date, with further payments scheduled for the balance of each scholar's education.
- 33 recipients have graduated and earned initial teacher certification. Of these:
 - 26 are currently teaching in Washington K-12 public schools;
 - 7 are in a grace period in which they have six months from graduation to begin teaching in an eligible school before their loan payments become due.

Of the 26 recipients who are currently teaching, two are in the content shortage area of special education. Many of the others who are not teaching in the designated content shortage areas bring to their classrooms their experiences as paraprofessionals in areas such as bilingual and special education.

Conclusions

Because of the short time period in which the Future Teachers' Conditional Scholarship program has been in operation, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions about success and, in particular, the program's impact on teaching shortage areas. Many of the conditional scholarship recipients remain enrolled in programs leading to future certification and teaching service. Nevertheless, the program has seen initial successes and suggests that long-term positive outcomes could be achieved through this or a similar program.

The program's link to classified personnel in the public K-12 system, while limiting eligibility, focused on individuals who had worked in the education system and understood the difficulties and rewards of working in that environment. As evidenced by their job titles, most applicants brought with them valuable knowledge and skills in content and pedagogy.

Early experience indicates there is much potential interest in this type of program. During the short application period, nearly 500 applications were received. Interest has continued, with requests from more than 200 individuals for information about the program since the application deadline.

The Future Teachers' Conditional Scholarship program was not funded beyond the current fiscal year. However, the Legislature has established a program to help people with particular educational experience who wish to pursue a career in teaching. The Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) administers the Alternative Route Teachers Certification Program.

RESOLUTION NO. 02-05

WHEREAS, Engrossed House Bill (EHB) 2487, the FY 2000 Supplemental Budget Act, established and funded a demonstration project to address teacher shortages in the K-12 public school system by providing forgivable loans to public school classified employees desiring to obtain certification to teach in Washington's public schools; and

WHEREAS, Continued funding for the demonstration project was provided by Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 6153, the 2001-03 biennial operating budget; and

WHEREAS, The Higher Education Coordinating Board was directed by EHB 2487 and ESSB 6153 to administer the future teachers' conditional scholarship program and to provide the Legislature and the Governor with findings about the impact of this demonstration project on persons entering the teaching profession in shortage areas;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the transmittal of the "Future Teachers' Conditional Scholarship Program Evaluation" report to the Legislature and to the Governor.

Adopted:

February 6, 2002

Attest:

Bob Craves, Chair

Pat Stanford, Secretary